



The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) “Supporting the Democratic Aspirations of the Tunisian People”

MEPI and Tunisia’s Democratic Transition

Since January 2011 and in immediate response to the Tunisian Revolution, the United States has committed approximately \$55 million in non-security assistance in support of Tunisia’s democratic transition. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) at the Department of State is the principal contributor to the overall non-security assistance the United States is providing, leading the U.S. Government’s efforts to support the Tunisian people during this historical transition. After January 14, 2011, MEPI realigned its budget to free up more than \$26 million, supporting more than 30 projects in Tunisia working directly with Tunisian society. Through its regional office in Tunis and headquarters in Washington, DC, MEPI has worked with Tunisians since 2002, supporting their aspirations for prosperity and long-term stability. MEPI currently supports programming in the following areas:

Enhancing Tunisian Civil Society

MEPI continues to expand its engagement with local civil society organizations through its unique local grants program, which directly supports civic groups throughout the country. MEPI local grants respond to priorities and proposals from local organizations, ensuring that Tunisians remain in front of their democratic transition and have opportunities to get involved in civic life. Since January 2011, MEPI’s Regional Office in Tunis has awarded more than 15 new local grants to advance the role of Tunisia’s civil society with a focus on women and youth. Grantees such as the Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) are working to increase public awareness about citizen rights, gender equality, and active citizenship. MEPI has awarded two larger grants to Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground, both working with Tunisian civil society organizations across the country to promote civic engagement with youth from the capital and coastal cities to the interior of the country.

Expanding Freedom of Expression and Strengthening Political Participation

New MEPI projects are empowering citizens, especially women and youth, to share their ideas with national and international audiences and to discuss social issues and governmental actions through blogging and internet-based media sites. MEPI local grantee Club UNESCO created a youth-run web-radio station to cover political events, and the Tunisian American Association for Management Studies (TAAMS) is working with youth to develop their sense of responsibility for the democratic process while instilling the values of tolerance. The Institute of International Education (IIE) is building the capacity of civil society organizations to effectively use new media – such as Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and other internet-based tools – to strengthen constituent outreach, inform and engage communities, and improve communication with government institutions on social and political issues. MEPI is also working with the Institute of War and Peace Reporting to increase the quality of local news coverage by engaging with members of the media and citizen journalists, placing an emphasis on accurate political reporting throughout the country.



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Advancing the Rule of Law

MEPI is assisting Tunisians to develop and promote a new legal system that is accessible and fair and that protects the rights of all citizens. In partnership with the American Bar Association (ABA), MEPI is promoting legal reforms across a range of sectors in Tunisia. ABA is partnering with the Tunisian Bar Association and other legal entities to reform Tunisia’s electoral code, address citizen electoral complaints, and improve women’s legal rights and participation in the political process. Later this year, ABA will work with its Tunisian partners to organize a national forum on the role of women in transitional processes focusing on comparative experiences; women’s rights in law and constitutional reform; and advocacy for law reform. Participants will include women jurists, rights groups, civil society organizations, and political party representatives, among others.

Widening Economic Opportunity

Since January of 2011, MEPI has increased its assistance in market-relevant skills training, job placement, and access to start-up business resources. With MEPI support, the Education for Employment Foundation (EFE) recently launched job placement and entrepreneurship programs for youth throughout Tunisia. MEPI’s regional partner Injaz Al-Arab is inspiring a culture of business innovation among Tunisian youth through business plan competitions for hundreds of young entrepreneurs. In addition, the Commercial Law and Development Program (CLDP) and the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC) are supporting entrepreneurship and franchising, as well as reforms to the country’s commercial legal infrastructure.

The United States is committed to supporting the Tunisian transition and the Tunisian efforts to build strong foundations for democratic growth and economic opportunity. MEPI plans to devote additional resources in the months and years ahead to assist Tunisia in becoming a more pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous society, as well as a stable and successful example of democratic transition in the region. For more information, please visit www.mepi.state.gov.

